



Book Review

**Identity and belonging among Chinese Canadian youth:
Racialized habitus in school, family, and media**

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Cui, D. (2023). Identity and belonging among Chinese Canadian youth: Racialized habitus in school, family, and media. Routledge. 142 pages 1B/W Illustrations. ISBN: 9780367514822 (hbk), ISBN: 9781003054023 (ebk).

In an era of conflict and uncertainty, how do Chinese immigrant descendants perceive their identities to race, ethnicity, and nationality within North American societies? *Identity and Belonging among Chinese Canadian Youth: Racialized Habitus in School, Family, and Media* by Dan Cui is a groundbreaking work that explores the identity formation and negotiation of belonging among Chinese immigrant youth and young adults in Canada. The book aims to equip educators across disciplines with a deeper understanding of how Chinese Canadian students navigate their identities as racialized minorities in school, within family, and through their interactions with mainstream media.

This book brings to the forefront the voices of second-generation Chinese immigrant descendants who are often silenced and marginalized from academic and public attention. Through the innovative concept of *racialized habitus*, Cui offers a nuanced theoretical understanding that racism operates not only at systemic and institutional levels but also infiltrates the individual psyche, shaping ways of thinking, acting, and being, often beyond conscious awareness. This perspective provides a fresh lens for adult educators seeking to understand anti-Asian, particularly anti-Chinese, racism in contemporary society. The book is structured into five chapters, each contributing valuable insights into the complex intersections of identity, race, and belonging.

Chapter 1 traces the evolution of racialized habitus among Canadians by examining the history of anti-Chinese sentiment and movements in the labor market, media, and educational systems. Cui argues that the term "Chinese" is not a neutral reference to ethnicity or nationality but rather a racialized label laden with historical derogatory connotations. Chapter 2 demystifies Canada's multiculturalism policy, highlighting the challenges Chinese immigrant families face in preserving their ethnic language and cultural heritage despite the nation's rhetoric of diversity and inclusion. Chapter 3 deconstructs the model minority stereotype and identifies three detrimental effects it has on the identity formation of Chinese immigrant descendants. Chapter 4 focuses on the factors contributing to Chinese students' identity struggles at school, examining the influences of school and program choices, teacher and peer relationships, and the representation of China and Chinese people in school curricula. It demonstrates how racialized habitus manifests not only through intergroup exclusion but also as intragroup distinctions. Chapter 5 addresses the underrepresentation and misrepresentation of the Chinese community in Western media, identifying three recurring themes: invisibility and inauthentic portrayals; the perpetuation of slanted-eyes stereotypes; and the assumption of Chinese people as foreign threats.

Cui's book stands out in five distinct ways. First, it applies a groundbreaking theoretical lens—the concept of *racialized habitus* to address racial oppression, particularly anti-Chinese and anti-Asian racism, which creatively extends Bourdieu's framework to include race and ethnicity, a truly novel contribution to the field. Unlike most existing literature which primarily focuses on structural and institutional racism, this book shines a spotlight on an often-overlooked dimension: how individuals internalize these racialized social structures, forming deep-seated dispositions that shape their thoughts and behaviors towards "others."

Second, it takes a multifaceted approach to thoroughly examine the "field," delivering a holistic understanding of Chinese immigrants' lived and educational experiences and their descendants in Canada. This includes a description from historical roots to contemporary realities to address a broad spectrum of topics such as labor market exploitation, education and curriculum, family dynamics, media representation, and immigration and multiculturalism policies. This holistic analysis distinguishes itself by seamlessly integrating intricate historical details and compelling interview narratives. Such an approach effectively illuminates the oftenoverlooked intricacies of the journeys undertaken by Chinese immigrants.

Third, it boldly disrupts the conventional Black-White framework used to understand discrimination and exclusion, pushing beyond this oversimplified binary to reveal a more complex and layered picture. It offers a nuanced exploration of intergroup marginalization and intragroup distinctions based on race, class, language, and levels of cultural assimilation. The sophisticated analysis sheds light on the diverse and sometimes conflicting dynamics within and between communities, making it an invaluable contribution to studying race and identity.

Fourth, rather than depicting Chinese immigrants and their descendants solely as passive victims of discrimination, this book powerfully showcases their agency,

resistance, and resilience. The author reveals how they actively navigate and challenge educational and social inequalities in their daily lives. By highlighting their strengths and strategies for confronting these barriers, the book reframes them not just as subjects of oppression but as empowered actors shaping their narratives, adding a refreshing and empowering dimension to the experiences of Chinese immigrants. Finally, for U.S. and Western researchers, this book provides a compelling comparative perspective on the shared and distinct adaptation experiences of Chinese immigrant families and their descendants within the unique Canadian context. It invites readers to reflect deeper on how national policies and social environments shape the lives and identities of Chinese diasporic communities.

Cui's book *Identity and Belonging among Chinese Canadian Youth: Racialized Habitus in School, family, and Media* is a must-read for anyone interested in learning about AAPI, particularly the immigration studies of Chinese people, the sociology of education, race and ethnicity, Asian diasporas, and multiculturalism for social justice education. I also highly recommend it to adult educators, immigrant parents, and community workers who work closely with immigrant populations. It is an essential resource for scholars and practitioners to engage in a meaningful impact through multicultural education by gaining a profound understanding of the intricate needs and challenges experienced by AAPI communities.



Dr. Qi Sun is an associate professor and program coordinator for the Adult and Continuing Education Ph.D. Program at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. Dr. Sun's research interests include adult learning and lifelong learning, international & comparative education, Confucian and Eastern educational philosophies, workforce development, and online learning. She received the AAACE 2022 Imogene Okes Award for Outstanding Research in Adult Education. She is also the recipient of the 2023 Mid-Career Award from AAACE's Commission for Professors of Adult Education

(CPAE). Her extensive experience as the former co-editor of *Adult Education Quarterly* and serving on numerous editorial boards has broadened her perspectives on global adult education research. Dr. Sun's identity as an international faculty member, a woman of color, and an Asian immigrant has enabled her to advocate for diversity, inclusion, and equality research. As the Chair of the Asian Adult Education (AAE) conference, Dr. Sun has actively promoted much-needed research by Asian diaspora and Asian scholars and studies on topics related to AAPI, highlighting their contributions to the deficiency of adult education literature. For this goal, she has coedited multiple Special Issues for leading journals in the field, including *Convergence*, the official journal of the International Council of Adult Education (ICAE), *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, *Journal of Higher Education*, *Skills and Work-based Learning (HESWBL)*.